

Del. 1 tolls kick in today

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Some motorists say they'll use U.S. 13 instead to bypass fees

By CHIP GUY
Staff reporter

Motorists who have enjoyed a few weeks of toll-free travel along the newest stretch of Del. 1 will have to pay up beginning at 3 p.m. today.

That's when tollbooths at the Biddles Corner plaza and the Boyds Corner interchange officially open.

But some motorists believe the tolls will drive a number of cars and trucks back onto U.S. 13, the road Del. 1 now bypasses.

Since the first lanes of the nearly \$99 million toll road opened in mid-October, cars and trucks have been allowed to travel the 11-mile bypass around Odessa and Boyds Corner free.

Tolls could not go into effect until ramps allowing free passage over the new Chesapeake & Delaware Canal bridge could be finished, said Mike Williams, a spokesman with the state Department of Transportation.

Those ramps connecting U.S. 13 and Del. 1 at the south side of the canal are expected to open this morning.

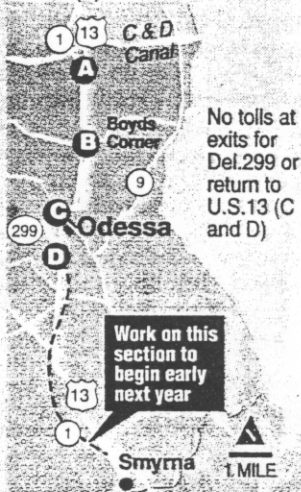
Tolls for the bypass will vary for different vehicles at different locations. For most vehicles — specifically cars and pickups — the toll at the Biddles Corner plaza will be \$1. Tolls will be higher for vehicles with three or more axles.

At its highest, a six-axle vehicle will have to pay \$10 to go the approximately 20 miles from Biddles Corner south to the Dover toll plaza.

Rates, however, will be between 15 percent and 75 per-

Del. 1 tolls begin

Tolls will go into effect today at Biddles Corner (A) and Boyds Corner (B)



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Toll rates

The new tolls for two- and six-axle vehicles on Del. 1:

Two-axle vehicles

Between		Cash	E-ZPass
Biddles	Boyds	\$1.00	\$0.43
	S. Smyrna	1.25	1.06
	Denneys	1.50	1.28
	Dover	2.00	1.70
Boyds	S. Smyrna	\$0.75	\$0.64
	Denneys	1.00	0.85
	Dover	1.50	1.28
S. Smyrna	Denneys	\$0.50	\$0.21
	Dover	1.00	0.64
Denneys	Dover	\$1.00	\$0.43

Six-axle vehicles

Between		Cash	E-ZPass
Biddles	Boyds	\$5.00	\$1.25
	S. Smyrna	6.25	3.13
	Denneys	7.50	3.75
	Dover	10.00	5.00
Boyds	S. Smyrna	\$3.75	\$1.88
	Denneys	5.00	2.50
	Dover	7.50	3.75
S. Smyrna	Denneys	\$2.50	\$0.63
	Dover	5.00	1.88
Denneys	Dover	\$5.00	\$1.25

Source: DelDOT

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cent cheaper for motorists using E-ZPass.

E-ZPass is an electronic collection system that deducts tolls from a customer's pre-paid account.

Williams said drivers should be aware that the tolls are going into effect.

"They need to go through the booths," Williams said of

motorists paying with cash. If they use the E-ZPass express lanes without paying, motorists could face a \$25 fine.

Since Del. 1 began opening in phases a month ago, most of the traffic has disappeared from the U.S. 13 corridor. A ride through historic Odessa these days seems almost like a trip into the past.

"It's like a ghost town now," said Pat Wiseman, manager of the Conoco filling station on U.S. 13 in Odessa.

But that could begin to change today as some drivers move back onto the old highway to avoid the Del. 1 tolls.

Highway officials expect about 20,000 vehicles a day to use U.S. 13, and 30,000 a day on Del. 1, Williams said.

Kathy O'Neil of Clayton said she will not be using the new toll road on her commute to her Wilmington job.

"Not for a dollar," O'Neil said Tuesday morning. "No way. I'll stay on Route 13."

Ralph Merced of near

Port Penn agreed.

"If I'm going to go from here to Smyrna, I'm just going to use Route 13," Merced said. "Wouldn't you?"

DelDOT officials expect the new highway to appeal more to commuters and long-distance travelers, rather than to local drivers.

Del. 1 will be especially appealing to drivers heading to and from the Delaware beaches during summer, officials said.

Wiseman, though, is banking on travelers like O'Neil and Merced to return. Since Del. 1 opened and traffic was siphoned from the old highway, sales at her convenience store have dropped 40 percent to 50 percent.

Wiseman said it is not uncommon for the once-bustling Conoco to go 30 minutes without a customer.

"We need 'em back," she said.

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Gina Cycyk of Middletown, who will be taking vehicle tolls on Del. 1 beginning today, answers a question from a motorist Tuesday.

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